

Inspection of The Links Primary School

Carnoustie Drive, Eaglescliffe, Stockton-on-Tees TS16 9ES

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend The Links Primary School. They demonstrate a high level of respect for each other and the whole school community. Pupils' behaviour in class and around school is impressive. The school is a warm and welcoming place to learn. This ethos is set by leaders and governors. They lead by example. Relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and caring.

There are high expectations for all pupils in school. Pupils experience a curriculum that is both broad and ambitious. Pupils are eager to share their learning and achievements. They talk about their work with excitement.

Pupils' have positive attitudes to learning. They are focused during lessons and behave consistently well. Bullying is rare. Pupils are clear that if bullying did happen, it would be sorted quickly. Pupils feel very safe at school. Pupils are passionate about equality. Everyone is included at The Links.

Most parents are very positive about the school. They recognise the caring ethos staff have for their children. One parent said that the school has 'high expectations for the children and helps them to achieve their best both personally and academically.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders are proud of their work to develop the curriculum. Subject leaders are passionate about their subjects. They use research effectively to make decisions. Leaders have designed and developed the curriculum, so that pupils make connections between learning within and between subjects.

Pupils make a positive start to reading. Children in the early years enjoy phonics sessions. In Reception, children are excited to blend sounds together to make words. The teaching of phonics has a clear structure. Pupils benefit from this. Their outcomes are good. Quality training enables staff to deliver the early reading scheme with precision. When pupils mispronounce sounds, staff correct pupils' pronunciation without hesitation. Staff ensure that the books chosen for pupils who are in the early stages of reading are well matched to their phonic knowledge. In reading, leaders prioritise pupils' fluency and confidence. Older pupils enjoy a rich range of books. They know a wide selection of authors and genres.

The mathematics curriculum engages and challenges pupils. Leaders have sequenced the content clearly. Pupils regularly revisit their learning. This has a positive impact on pupils' knowledge over time. Pupils problem solve and reason with increasing confidence and accuracy in mathematics. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. Leaders ensure that the correct use of mathematical language is an important part of the curriculum. This starts in early years, for example, when children compare the sizes of towers using mathematical vocabulary accurately.

The quality of the curriculum in other subjects is inconsistent, but developing. In art and design, for example, pupils revisit previous learning to ensure it is embedded on a regular basis. Whereas in history, the content of the new curriculum does not take account of gaps in pupils' existing knowledge consistently.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well to access the full curriculum. Adults and pupils use a range of resources to support learning. The use of specialist advice helps support pupils in class. Leaders have not ensured that some plans for pupils with SEND have precise enough targets.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is well sequenced. Pupils understand what healthy relationships look like and how families are different from each other. School visits, including educational visits to places of worship, enhance the curriculum further. Pupils write to their local member of parliament to raise awareness of community issues, so that the area around school is safer for everyone. To help online safety lessons be more relevant, pupils lead sessions for their peers. For example, as part of an online safety day, pupils planned and taught the lessons across school. Pupils' knowledge about how to keep safe online is clear.

The positive relationships between pupils and staff start in early years and extend throughout the school. Pupils value each other and value the differences between themselves. Inclusivity is a key part of school life. When pupils discuss and debate school issues, they provide challenge to each other's thinking in a respectful way. Pupils behave very well in class and as they move around school. Low-level disruption is very rare. In classes, pupils talk animatedly about their learning. They share ideas and make suggestions. Pupils' behaviour is exceptional.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They have leaders who listen to them. Leaders are considerate of their workload. Governors and those who represent the trust provide appropriate challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority for leaders, staff and governors. There is a culture of vigilance. The designated safeguarding lead and their team keep timely records. Staff and governors receive regular training about safeguarding. Leaders track and support the attendance of pupils who may be vulnerable. Leaders make sure that adults in school are suitable to work with pupils.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are clear that they have trusted adults to help them. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in the community and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The content of some subjects, beyond English and mathematics, is not fully embedded. Gaps in pupils' prior learning are not identified and addressed thoroughly. Leaders should ensure that curriculum content is sequenced clearly and that gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and addressed effectively.
- The support plans of some pupils with SEND do not have purposeful and accurate targets. Pupils do not make the small steps necessary to close gaps in their learning. Leaders must support teachers to develop more precise targets for pupils with SEND.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143077
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10242434
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Jill McGuire
Headteacher	Carly Briston
Website	www.thelinksprimary.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Links Primary School converted to an academy school in August 2016.
- The school is part of the Vision Academy Learning Trust.
- There is an on-site breakfast club and after-school club managed by the school.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and history. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers. They spoke to pupils

about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils at the early stages of reading with a familiar adult.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff, parents and a range of stakeholders, including governors. Safeguarding documentation was scrutinised, including the safeguarding policies, and the single central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults. Inspectors also met with the designated safeguarding leads.
- Inspectors gathered views of parents informally in person and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with them. Pupils' views were considered through meetings.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the governing body, the trustees, the chief executive of the trust and the school improvement representative from the trust.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes, during breaks and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Fallon

Ofsted Inspector

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